

				mm.
Teeth, horizontal length of I^2	...	...	...	1.5
„ height of <i>Canine</i>	...	...	...	2.3
„ length of P^4	...	...	...	3.2
„ length of M^{1-3}	..	...	...	11.4
„ diastema of I^3 and <i>C.</i>	...	...	...	3.7
„ „ <i>C.</i> and P^1	...	...	...	2.8
„ „ P^1 and P^3	...	...	...	1.0
„ length of lower I^1	...	...	...	9.8

It is interesting to notice that the structure of the tail corresponds with the habits of the animals; thus, in *P. herbertensis*, which ascends the highest trees, the lower surface is naked for a greater portion of its length and is roughened so as to afford a secure grip of the topmost wind-swayed branches. In its more lowly habit, *P. colletti* avoids such positions, and has therefore less need of special adaptation.

It may be mentioned that *P. mongon*, De Vis,* of which we hold co-types from the describer, exhibits none of the characters here sought to be emphasised, and except in the markings does not differ from typical examples of *P. herbertensis*, as previously determined.

THE NEST OR DREY OF THE RING-TAILED OPOSSUM, (*PSEUDOCHIRUS PEREGRINUS*, BODD).

BY EDGAR R. WAITE, F.L.S., Zoologist.

(Plate xix.)

ONE of the most peculiar and interesting habits of the Ring-tailed Opossum (*Pseudochirus peregrinus*, Bodd), is that of making a nest or drey. Although well-known, but little appears to have been written on the subject beyond the notice that it is not unlike that of the European Squirrel.

I as often found the drey of this latter animal in a hole in a tree as among the branches, a situation never utilised by the Opossum. The nest of the Marsupial may be constructed either in a fork or upon a platform of interlaced twigs. A thick bush is more favoured than a tree, but almost any growth, if sufficiently dense, may be made use of: the Lilly Pilly (*Eugenia*), offers a congenial retreat, as does also the Tea Tree (*Melaleuca*), its long strips of loose bark being frequently woven into the nest. The native "Oaks" (*Casuarina*), and the Wattles (*Acacia*), are further favourites. Preference is shown for the neighbourhood of water.

* De Vis—Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales (2) i., 1887, p. 1130.

The animal is usually a lowly builder, especially if a thick bush be selected, the nest may then be within seven or eight feet of the ground. In more open foliage it may be raised twenty or even thirty feet: in such cases a more careful attempt is made to conceal the structure, hanging bark, drooping moss, or a mass of foliage being pressed into service.

The nest is carefully and neatly made. It has for foundation small sticks from which finer twigs are carried upwards and brought together in the form of an elongated dome. An aperture is provided at one end through which the animal gains access; thus giving a bottle-like appearance to the fabrication. Leaves, grasses, and mosses are skilfully woven into the structure, the mouth excepted; this is narrowed and projects somewhat, and is usually composed of naked twigs alone. The interior is smoothly lined with fine grasses, and the whole forms a compact and fairly firm structure.

We have recently received from Mr. J. M. Cantle a drey of this Opossum, wherein the usual type has been considerably departed from. Grasses and mosses have been entirely discarded, and their place supplied by the fronds of ferns. Ferns only are to be seen within, but I am inclined to think that the drey was not quite completed and that a smoother lining would have been provided. Mr. Thomas Whitelegge has identified the fronds as wholly of *Pteris esculenta*, Forst. This example measures:—Length, 14 inches; breadth, 11 inches; greatest circumference, 36 inches.

The drey is occupied only by the female; but whether the male also takes part in its construction, I have been unable to learn. If any of my readers have made observations on this or any other matter connected with the animal, I shall be pleased to hear from them.

Although one usually associates the drey as a habitation of the female while carrying young in her pouch, it would appear, as I learn from one or two sources, that the young are occasionally left in the drey during the absence of the mother, and Mr. R. Grant tells me that he once kept alive, two young Opossums which he obtained under such circumstances.

If disturbed in her retreat, the mother may become very savage. On one occasion Mr. J. A. Thorpe having too incautiously sought to investigate the nest, received very severe wounds—the animal making its teeth meet in the fleshy part of the hand. This nest was placed in a small Eucalypt, and was reached from the ground by bending down the branches.

It remains to be mentioned that the Ring-tailed Opossum does not enjoy a monopoly in nest making among members of the genus *Pseudochirus*. As described elsewhere in this publication (p. 91), such a habit is practised by *P. herbertensis*, var. *colletti*, the nest differing only, as far as we know, in being more ball-like in shape.